

**Before the  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Annual Assessment of the Status of	)	MB Docket No. 12-203
Competition in the Market for the	)	
Delivery of Video Programming	)	

**COMMENTS OF  
Woodbridge (CT) Government Access Television**

Woodbridge Government Access Television (WGATV) submits these comments in response to the above-captioned Notice of Inquiry (“NOI”), released July 20, 2012, seeking “data, information, and comment on the state of competition in the delivery of video programming.”

WGATV is a department of the Town of Woodbridge, Connecticut, governed by a five-person Commission and administered by a Coordinator, a part-time employee of the Town. The commissioners are appointed by the Board of Selectmen, on staggered four-year terms, with minority-majority party representation set forth in the Ordinances. WGATV operates a town-specific Governmental access television channel. ([woodbridgect.org](http://woodbridgect.org))

**1. How many channels does your MVPD operator(s) provide for PEG programming?**

The MVPD operator for Woodbridge, Cablevision of Southern Connecticut, provides three channels for Public-Educational-Governmental programming, identified as channels 77 (P), 78 (E) and 79 (G).

**2. On which tier are these channels placed and is extra equipment required to view them?**

All three channels are available on the lowest tier of service (Broadcast Basic), available at \$15.70/month according to the company's website:

[http://www.optimum.com/ratecard.jsp?searchby=corp&corp=07806&serviceType=io&z=06525&\\_requestid=170236](http://www.optimum.com/ratecard.jsp?searchby=corp&corp=07806&serviceType=io&z=06525&_requestid=170236)

Since 2009, all channels were changed from analog to digital, so subscribers with analog televisions need to rent set-top boxes. Subscribers who own QAM-tuned television sets may also received these channels as 99-912, 99-915, and 99-916.

**3. Are there more or fewer PEG channels carried on MVPD systems than were carried as of June 2010?**

The number of channels has remained the same since before June 2010.

**4. What data sources exist to track the availability of PEG programming?**

The state Public Utility Regulatory Authority (PURA), formerly the state Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC) and now a division of the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), maintains a website with several databases, including a listing of Public Access Channels and Studios, as well as annual reports from Community Access Providers (CAPs), Companies and Cable Advisory Councils.

[http://www.dpuc.state.ct.us/dpucinfo.nsf/\\$FormCATVRelatedItemsView?OpenForm](http://www.dpuc.state.ct.us/dpucinfo.nsf/$FormCATVRelatedItemsView?OpenForm)

**5. Have there been any consumer complaints about PEG accessibility on U-verse?**

WGATV is not currently connected to AT&T's U-Verse. The PURA-designated Community Access Provider is Sound View Community Media, Inc., based in Bridgeport, which provides Public access programming to Woodbridge, is connected to the U-Verse and (under a DPUC/PURA ruling) receives all per-subscriber funding from AT&T. In recent months, an AT&T representative has approached Woodbridge about interconnection, but financial considerations—any possible expense to the Town, without the possibility of relief from per-subscriber funds—may prove a barrier in negotiations.

We have heard from Woodbridge residents (including one of our commissioners) who had satellite TV service in the past, have switched to U-Verse and found it satisfactory, except for the lack of WGATV. Another GATV commissioner has complained about lack of U-Verse availability in her neighborhood, even knowing that WGATV would not be provided. One town employee who lives outside the service area and has U-Verse service was disappointed to find he could not see town meetings on the sub-channel designated as "Woodbridge Governmental."

**6. If applicable, explain how cutbacks in financing, state law changes, new technology, and so on have affected PEG programming in your community.**

As far as we can tell, Connecticut has always regulated cable television at the state level (*report by the Office of Legislative Research "History of Cable TV Regulation, 11/12/2009, <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2009/rpt/2009-R-0417.htm>*). We have been unable to confirm a story that the traditional franchise fee from cable companies has gone directly to state government, usually for DPUC/PURA operations but swept into the state's General Fund

in times of fiscal difficulty. Since Public Act 07-253, which incorporated “certified competitive video service” (IPTV) within the statutes governing cable television, there has been more funding available for capital expenses, more or the same funding for operating expenses (the per-subscriber fees) to those CAPS who have interconnected with AT&T’s U-Verse, but no change to PEG channel operators who are not PURA-designated Community Access Providers.

Because PEG operators in Connecticut are accustomed to such lean budgets, we have not suffered from threats of “going dark,” but we have been hampered in fulfilling our missions compared to our colleagues in other states. The need for funding has led to a struggle for funds among PEG operators—investigative dockets, requests for regulatory rulings and lawsuits. Our programming comes under criticism by industry representatives that would like to end per subscriber funding (*e.g., comments by the New England Cable and Telecommunications Association in DPUC Docket 11-01-03*

<http://www.dpuc.state.ct.us/dockhist.nsf/4ef55dc080a9867885256afe0059f70f/0e3753db3193a7e2852578d8005519e4?OpenDocument>). How could we possibly do more with any less than we receive now?

WGATV began utilizing channel 79 in 2000, transmitting programs from the regional school district soon after, transmitting programs of municipal government meetings in 2002, and transmitting live meetings from Town Hall since 2004. For most of its existence, WGATV has depended on the town budget (local taxpayers) for operational and capital costs. All per-subscriber fees go to the regional CAP, Sound View Community Media, Inc. So some taxpayers who do not subscribe to cable television still pay for programming that they cannot receive at home, and cable subscribers in town pay fees that do not contribute to their local Governmental channel.

For about six months in 2008, WGATV shared channel 79 with Sound View in exchange for a one-time payment of \$10,000, after a negotiated settlement mediated by the state DPUC. The funding was used for some equipment and to pay personnel for expanded municipal programming. The arrangement ended after the six-month pilot, after 2008 state legislation (PA 08-159) that provided a portion of per-subscriber funding to operators of town-specific channels within the service area that includes Woodbridge. The situation arising from that legislation is being challenged in state court by Sound View (<http://civillinquiry.jud.ct.gov/CaseDetail/PublicCaseDetail.aspx?DocketNo=HHDCV126034434-S>).

WGATV continues to cover municipal meetings of 6-10 boards and commissions each month, community events (when sponsored by a municipal agency), as well as information on municipal services. Since 2007, programs of local meetings and of the regional school district have also been provided on DVD at the town library for residents who do not have cable service. In 2007-08, WGATV put local meetings on Google Video, and in 2011-12 started a YouTube channel (<http://www.youtube.com/user/wgatv79>).

WGATV employs high school students who have taken video production classes as camera operators. Over the past seven years, five of the sixteen students who worked for us have gone on to study video, film and news production in college and as careers. These people often return during school vacations to look for interim work with us. This year, three high school graduates are working for us while taking part-time college classes, and one college graduate is continuing with us until more regular employment becomes available.

This past summer, Amity Regional High School has started regular Educational access programming on channel 78, using some of the per-subscriber funds available

since PA 08-159 for a broadcast server. The Amity channel is available to Woodbridge and Orange, two of the three member towns of the school district. [The third town, Bethany, is in a Comcast service area with regional company-operated PEG services and not connected to AT&T's U-Verse.] Amity programming includes productions by students in the video production classes and school board meetings recorded by the district's technology staff, paid by taxpayers of the three towns in the annual school budget. No other operational funding is available to this E channel.

Respectfully submitted for  
Woodbridge Government Access Television

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. Puamani Ford" followed by a horizontal line.

Pua Ford, coordinator  
Woodbridge Town Hall  
11 Meetinghouse Lane  
Woodbridge, CT 06525  
(203) 389-3400  
(203) 305-4068 (cell)  
pua4@hotmail.com